

Analyzing the Relations of Corporate Social Responsibility Initiatives on Community Well-Being and Poverty Reduction: Basis for Strategic Framework for Corporate Social Responsibility

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives on community well-being and poverty reduction in selected Philippine communities. Using a descriptive-correlational design, the research surveyed 100 respondents—including residents, leaders, and stakeholders—exposed to CSR programs led by manufacturing corporations. CSR initiatives were assessed across four key areas: education and skills development, health and wellness, livelihood and employment generation, and environmental sustainability. Findings revealed that respondents perceived a high level of CSR implementation across all domains, with the highest ratings in health programs and environmental efforts. Community well-being indicators such as access to education, mental health support, and employment stability also received high to very high ratings. However, notable gaps exist in digital literacy, affordable housing, and financial inclusion. Correlation analysis confirmed statistically significant relationships between CSR initiatives, particularly those related to health, environment, community development, and improvements in community well-being and poverty alleviation. Conversely, education and skills development programs showed limited short-term correlation, suggesting a longer time frame for impact realization. The study concludes that CSR is a vital instrument in promoting inclusive growth, addressing systemic inequalities, and fostering sustainable communities. Recommendations include expanding digital and financial literacy programs, aligning CSR strategies with national development plans and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and strengthening public-private partnerships. The findings contribute to the discourse on CSR as a transformative tool for development, offering a framework for more targeted and impactful CSR programs.

Keywords: corporate social responsibility, community well-being, poverty reduction, sustainable development, stakeholder engagement

Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has undergone a significant transformation over the past two decades, shifting from a voluntary philanthropic practice to a central component of corporate strategy. CSR is now recognized as a multidimensional framework that integrates economic, social, and environmental

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concerns into business operations, thereby extending the role of corporations beyond profit generation toward addressing societal challenges (Kun-Hsiang, 2020; Chen, 2020). This paradigm shift has been driven by heightened stakeholder expectations, global sustainability movements, and the increasing recognition that long-term corporate success is closely intertwined with community well-being and environmental stewardship (Hu, 2024; Zhang, 2024).

In the Philippine context, CSR has become particularly salient given the country's enduring socio-economic challenges, including high poverty incidence, income inequality, inadequate access to healthcare, and environmental degradation. Despite recent economic growth, nearly 18% of Filipinos still live below the national poverty line, while many more face vulnerabilities in health, education, and employment (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2023). Manufacturing, one of the country's key economic drivers, plays a critical role not only in national development but also in addressing community-level issues through CSR. This sector, comprising food processing, apparel, electronics, and chemical industries, has a substantial footprint in urban and peri-urban communities where CSR programs are most often implemented (Okafor et al., 2022).

CSR in the Philippines complements government-led poverty reduction strategies by leveraging private sector resources to bridge gaps in social services and community development. The Philippine government has long emphasized partnerships with the private sector in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). Corporations, through CSR, align their programs with these priorities by offering scholarships, vocational training, healthcare missions, and environmental conservation projects (Kyrylenko, 2023; Hoque et al., 2023). These initiatives provide direct benefits to local populations while reinforcing public-private partnerships that foster inclusive development (Newman et al., 2020).

CSR initiatives targeting education and skills development are widely recognized for their role in building human capital. Scholarship programs, school supply distributions, vocational training, and corporate mentorships provide opportunities for disadvantaged youth and adults to enhance their employability and long-term economic mobility (Uduji et al., 2020). Such interventions contribute to breaking cycles of intergenerational poverty by equipping individuals with knowledge and competencies aligned with market demands. Recent evidence shows that CSR programs aligned with workforce needs have a multiplier effect, fostering employability while strengthening local economic systems (Aivaz et al., 2024). However, gaps remain, particularly in the integration of digital literacy and technology skills, which are increasingly essential for competitiveness in the modern labor market (Xu & Ma, 2021).

Health-focused CSR initiatives also play a crucial role in enhancing community well-being. Programs such as free medical checkups, vaccination drives, mental health support, and nutrition campaigns address both immediate and long-term health needs (Liopa et al., 2022; Uduji et al., 2020). In communities with limited access to government health services, CSR health programs often serve as the first line of defense against preventable illnesses and poor nutrition. Importantly, these initiatives reduce the financial burden associated with healthcare, allowing households to redirect resources toward other essential needs, thereby indirectly contributing to poverty alleviation (Xu & Ma, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the importance of corporate involvement in public health, as many firms expanded CSR efforts to provide protective equipment, emergency relief, and mental health services during the crisis (Mahmud et al., 2021).

Environmental sustainability has also emerged as a critical domain of CSR. With the Philippines ranked among the most climate-vulnerable countries, corporate programs focusing on tree planting, reforestation, waste management, renewable energy, and climate change education are increasingly vital (Putri & Naili, 2023). These initiatives contribute not only to ecological restoration but also to community resilience by creating green jobs and promoting sustainable livelihoods (Suhadi et al., 2022). Research indicates that CSR strategies integrating environmental stewardship foster long-term benefits, including reduced disaster risks, improved public health, and enhanced food security (Lee & Kim, 2020). However, awareness campaigns and community involvement in environmental initiatives remain underdeveloped, limiting the broader cultural shift necessary for sustainable practices to take root at the community level (Banerjee et al., 2021).

The relationship between CSR and community well-being is well-documented in global literature. Studies demonstrate that CSR investments in education, healthcare, and social infrastructure improve quality of life, strengthen social cohesion, and build resilience (Meribe et al., 2021; Msambali, 2023). CSR contributes to both tangible outcomes, such as better health facilities and employment opportunities, and intangible benefits, such as improved trust between corporations and communities. Moreover, community participation in CSR program design has been found to increase ownership, relevance, and long-term impact (Onyishi et al., 2020). Nonetheless, questions remain about the sustainability of such initiatives, particularly when they are short-term or charity-driven rather than systematically embedded in corporate strategy (Liang & Li, 2020).

Poverty reduction, closely linked to community well-being, represents another major outcome of CSR. Evidence suggests that CSR programs that emphasize livelihood creation, microfinance, and entrepreneurship are especially effective in lifting individuals out of poverty (Kang et al., 2020; Huang et al., 2022). For example, targeted CSR interventions in agriculture and small business support have enabled communities to achieve greater financial independence, reduce vulnerability, and improve living standards (Anam et al., 2024). Health-related CSR has also been strongly correlated with poverty alleviation, as improved health outcomes reduce medical expenditures and increase labor force participation (Xu & Ma, 2021). Similarly, environmental CSR contributes to poverty reduction by generating alternative livelihoods, such as eco-tourism and sustainable farming, that enhance community resilience to economic and environmental shocks (Yudhistira, 2023).

Despite these positive contributions, research highlights several limitations in current CSR practice. Many initiatives remain focused on short-term, high-visibility activities—such as donation drives or one-time medical missions—rather than long-term structural solutions like affordable housing, financial inclusion, and systemic education reforms (Newman et al., 2020). Moreover, the impact of CSR is often measured in terms of corporate reputation rather than community outcomes, creating a disconnect between intention and actual poverty alleviation (Božić et al., 2021). In the Philippines, empirical studies examining the measurable effects of CSR on poverty reduction and community well-being remain limited, underscoring the need for rigorous research that captures both quantitative outcomes and stakeholder perspectives (Espinoza-Rivera, 2023).

This study addresses these gaps by systematically analyzing CSR initiatives in four domains—education and skills development, health and wellness, livelihood and employment generation, and environmental sustainability—and their relationship with community well-being and poverty reduction in selected Philippine communities. By employing a descriptive-correlational design and capturing the perspectives of residents, local leaders, and CSR beneficiaries, the research seeks to determine which CSR

domains yield the most significant and measurable impacts. Findings from this study aim to inform corporations, policymakers, and community advocates about how to design and implement CSR initiatives that are both socially transformative and aligned with the SDGs.

Ultimately, this research underscores the potential of CSR as a strategic tool for inclusive development. By moving beyond charity toward sustained partnerships and evidence-based interventions, CSR can catalyze empowering marginalized communities, reducing poverty, and enhancing overall quality of life. The study also contributes to the discourse on aligning corporate initiatives with national development goals and global sustainability agendas, reinforcing the critical role of the private sector in fostering equitable and resilient communities.

Objectives of the study

This study aimed to:

1. Identify the corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives implemented in the community. Assess the level of CSR in terms of education and skills development, health and wellness, livelihood and employment, and environmental programs.
2. Determine the level of community well-being in the areas of health, education, employment, and social well-being.
3. Examine the poverty level in the community in terms of income, basic needs fulfillment, and economic mobility.
4. Analyze the relationship between CSR initiatives and community well-being.
5. Determine whether CSR initiatives contribute to poverty reduction.

Methodology

Research Design. This study employed a descriptive-correlational design to examine the relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, community well-being, and poverty reduction. A descriptive approach was used to assess the extent of CSR practices and the levels of well-being and poverty in the target communities, while the correlational component determined the statistical relationships among these variables. This design is appropriate for identifying patterns and associations without manipulating variables, thus allowing the researcher to capture community perceptions within their natural settings (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Saunders et al., 2019).

Population and Sampling. The population consisted of residents, local leaders, and stakeholders in selected communities in the National Capital Region (NCR) where CSR initiatives of manufacturing corporations are actively implemented. A purposive sampling technique was adopted to ensure that participants had direct experience with CSR programs. Inclusion criteria required respondents to (a) be at least 18 years old, (b) reside in the community for at least one year, and (c) have exposure to CSR initiatives in education, health, livelihood, or environmental sustainability.

A total of 100 respondents participated, consistent with recommendations for descriptive-correlational studies and determined using the Raosoft sample size calculator with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error (Israel, 2019). This sample size is considered sufficient for regression analysis in

social research, where the minimum cases per predictor variable should range from 10 to 30 (Hair et al., 2020).

Research Instrument. The study utilized a structured questionnaire composed of four sections: (1) demographic profile; (2) CSR initiatives; (3) community well-being; and (4) poverty indicators. CSR initiatives were measured using a 20-item scale covering education and skills, health and wellness, livelihood and employment, and environmental sustainability. Community well-being was assessed through a 20-item scale addressing health access, education opportunities, employment stability, and social-psychological well-being. Poverty was measured using a 15-item scale that focused on income sufficiency, access to basic needs, and economic mobility. All items used a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very low) to 4 (very high), which is effective in capturing gradations of perception while minimizing respondent fatigue (Joshi et al., 2015).

Validity and reliability were established through a pilot test with 30 respondents from a similar community not included in the main study. Content validity was reviewed by a panel of CSR and community development experts, while internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with values of 0.70 or higher considered acceptable (Taber, 2018).

Data Gathering Procedure. Before data collection, the researcher secured approval from local authorities and obtained ethics clearance from the Institutional Review Board. Informed consent was distributed along with the questionnaires, ensuring that participation was voluntary and confidential. Data were collected through both printed forms and online survey platforms to increase accessibility. Respondents were given one week to complete the questionnaire, with reminders sent to encourage timely responses. All data were stored securely and anonymized to protect participant identities in compliance with research ethics standards (American Psychological Association [APA], 2020).

Data Analysis. Data were processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Descriptive statistics—frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation—were used to summarize respondent profiles and perceptions of CSR initiatives, community well-being, and poverty. Weighted mean interpretation followed a four-point scale classification. For inferential analysis, Pearson correlation was used to test the relationships between CSR initiatives and the dependent variables (community well-being and poverty). To further identify predictors, multiple regression analysis was performed, consistent with methods recommended for examining the relative contributions of multiple independent variables (Hair et al., 2020). Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

Results and Discussions

1. CSR Initiatives Implemented

The analysis of CSR initiatives in the target communities highlights a clear prioritization of short-term, visible interventions over systemic, long-term development programs. Among the most frequently implemented were career development and job readiness training (34%), entrepreneurship programs (24%), and medical missions and free health checkups (54%). These initiatives address pressing community

concerns such as employability and access to healthcare. However, initiatives like digital literacy (3%), vaccination programs (5%), and housing projects (5%) received the least attention, underscoring critical gaps in the CSR portfolio.

These patterns resonate with Newman et al. (2020), who noted that corporations often favor highly visible CSR initiatives that demonstrate immediate responsiveness to community needs, thereby enhancing corporate reputation. Yet, such strategies may lack sustainability, as they tend not to address structural inequities like inadequate housing or technological exclusion. In the Philippine context, this imbalance reflects the historical orientation of CSR toward charity-based programs, such as feeding drives or gift-giving, rather than long-term investments in systemic change (Espinoza-Rivera, 2023).

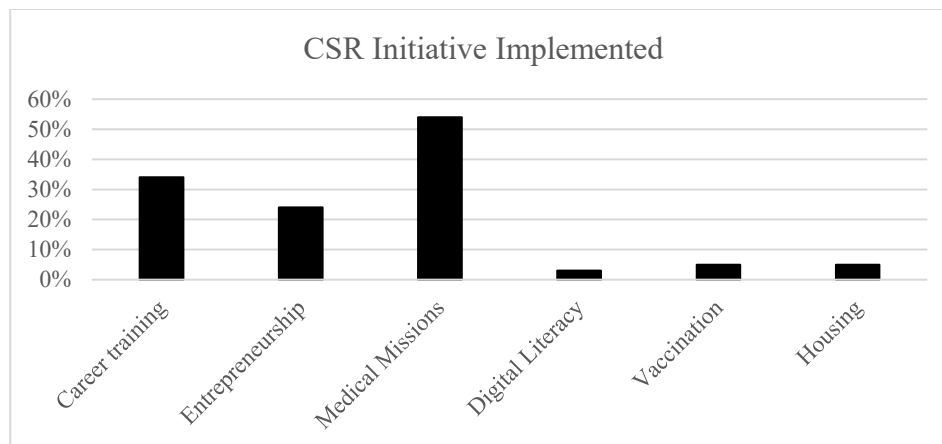


Figure 1. Distribution of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in the target communities

Figure 1 presents the distribution of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in the target communities. Medical missions were the most frequently implemented (54%), followed by career training (34%) and entrepreneurship programs (24%). In contrast, digital literacy (3%), vaccination campaigns (5%), and housing projects (5%) were the least common.

Global evidence suggests that CSR programs are most effective when they combine visibility with sustainability. For example, Kang et al. (2020) highlighted how targeted supply-chain CSR interventions in China reduced poverty by investing in local agriculture, thereby addressing both immediate and long-term community needs. In contrast, the relative neglect of housing projects in this study mirrors findings from Anam et al. (2024), who emphasized that while corporations frequently support education or health, large-scale infrastructure projects are often deemed too costly or beyond corporate mandates. This gap is significant given that housing security is one of the strongest determinants of poverty alleviation and overall well-being.

2. Level of CSR Initiatives

CSR implementation across domains was rated high: education and skills ($M = 3.06$), health and wellness ($M = 3.11$), livelihood and employment ($M = 3.14$), and environment ($M = 3.16$). Among these, environmental sustainability achieved the highest rating, with tree planting and reforestation cited by 50%

of respondents. This reflects a strong ecological consciousness among corporations, consistent with Strielkowski et al. (2021), who found that renewable energy and reforestation initiatives in the Baltic states were among the most publicly visible CSR commitments.

Health and wellness initiatives also performed strongly, with respondents recognizing corporations for implementing programs that promoted both physical and psychological well-being. These findings align with Liopa et al. (2022), who observed that health-related CSR programs became increasingly salient during the COVID-19 pandemic, as companies stepped in to provide services where governments struggled.

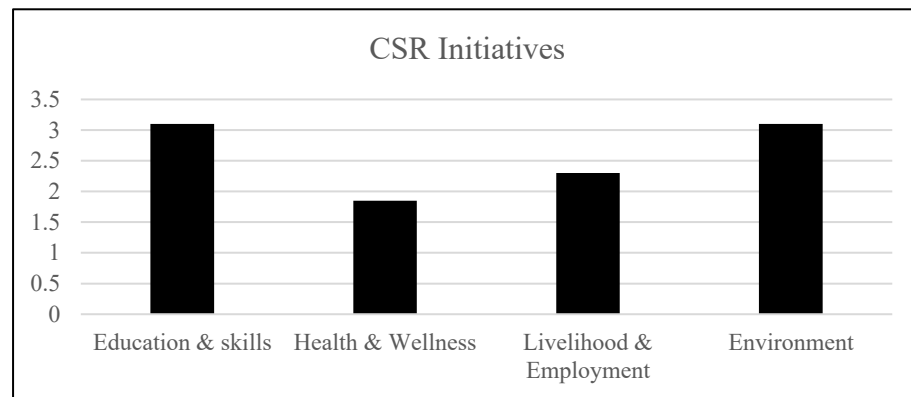


Figure 2. Mean ratings of CSR initiatives across four domains

The figure above illustrates the mean ratings of CSR initiatives across four domains. Environmental sustainability received the highest mean score ($M = 3.16$), followed closely by livelihood and employment ($M = 3.14$) and health and wellness ($M = 3.11$). Education and skills development registered the lowest mean score ($M = 3.06$), though still within the “high” range on the 1–4 Likert scale.

Education and skills development, while positively rated, revealed weaknesses in digital literacy ($M = 3.00$), suggesting a misalignment with 21st-century workforce requirements. Xu and Ma (2021) emphasized that sustainable CSR in education must integrate digital training and technology access to prepare marginalized populations for the digital economy. The Philippine government has also underscored this gap, particularly during the pandemic when digital exclusion widened inequalities in education (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2023).

Livelihood programs received high scores ($M = 3.14$), particularly those aligned with local economic and cultural contexts ($M = 3.26$). These results reinforce Uduji et al. (2020), who stressed that CSR efforts tailored to local realities—such as rural agriculture or urban microenterprise—are more effective than standardized interventions. However, the lower ratings for financial literacy and access to microfinance suggest underinvestment in financial inclusion, which remains a cornerstone of sustainable poverty reduction (Ventura & Jauregui, 2023).

3. Community Well-being

Community well-being was generally rated high to very high across the four dimensions: health ($M = 3.13$), education ($M = 3.30$), employment ($M = 3.05$), and social-psychological well-being ($M = 3.17$). Preventive healthcare programs were particularly valued ($M = 3.29$), reflecting strong corporate

engagement in health promotion. However, affordability concerns ($M = 3.03$) indicate that CSR efforts may not fully address systemic inequities in healthcare costs. These findings mirror Uduji et al. (2020), who argued that CSR health programs often enhance accessibility but may not substantially reduce cost-related barriers. Xu and Ma (2021) similarly emphasized that CSR's impact on health is maximized when initiatives are embedded in long-term healthcare partnerships rather than episodic medical missions.

Education received the highest well-being score ($M = 3.30$), with strong emphasis on support for underprivileged groups ($M = 3.48$). This underscores the transformative potential of CSR scholarships and training in promoting inclusivity. According to Aivaz et al. (2024), CSR programs that link education directly to employability pathways are most effective in lifting communities out of poverty. However, the lower ratings for continuous learning opportunities ($M = 3.19$) suggest limited sustainability in educational programming.

Employment and income stability scored positively ($M = 3.05$), though respondents expressed concerns about wage sufficiency ($M = 3.05$) and inclusivity for marginalized groups ($M = 2.95$). Kement et al. (2023) confirmed that CSR employment programs often focus on job creation but fail to address wage equity and employment quality, which are crucial for long-term well-being. These findings highlight the need for CSR programs to advocate not only for employment opportunities but also for fair compensation.

Mental health programs received very high ratings ($M = 3.38$), reflecting a growing recognition of psychological wellness as part of CSR commitments. This aligns with global trends noted by Msambali (2023), who found that corporations increasingly incorporate mental health into CSR agendas as communities recover from pandemic-induced stress. However, weaker ratings in community support ($M = 2.99$) suggest that social cohesion remains fragile, echoing Dincer and Dincer (2021), who argued that CSR must foster not only individual well-being but also collective trust and inclusion.

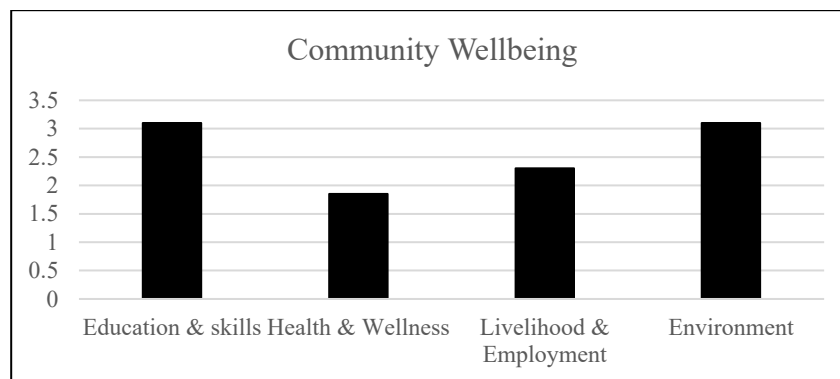


Figure 3. Mean ratings of community well-being across four dimensions

The figure 3 shows the mean ratings of community well-being across four dimensions. Education and skills opportunities received the highest mean score ($M = 3.30$), followed by social well-being ($M = 3.17$) and health and healthcare access ($M = 3.13$). Employment and income stability was rated the lowest ($M = 3.05$), though still within the “high” range of the Likert scale.

4. Poverty Levels

Poverty reduction was rated high but uneven. Strong outcomes were observed in education access ($M = 3.34$) and food and water security ($M = 3.25$), while weaker results emerged in housing conditions ($M = 2.92$) and income equality ($M = 2.69$).

These findings are consistent with Anam et al. (2024), who emphasized that CSR contributions to poverty reduction are significant but limited when basic structural needs such as housing remain unaddressed. Respondents also highlighted challenges in economic mobility ($M = 2.89$), suggesting that while CSR creates access to basic services, it may not yet translate into long-term financial independence. This echoes Yudhistira (2023), who argued that CSR programs must shift from relief-driven approaches to sustainable, income-generating interventions to break cycles of poverty.

The support for small businesses and entrepreneurship ($M = 3.24$) emerged as a strength, reinforcing evidence from Uduji et al. (2020) that CSR programs promoting local enterprise are highly effective in fostering resilience. However, limited access to credit and financial services ($M = 2.96$) points to persistent barriers, consistent with Ventura and Jauregui (2023), who identified financial inclusion as a key driver of sustainable poverty alleviation.

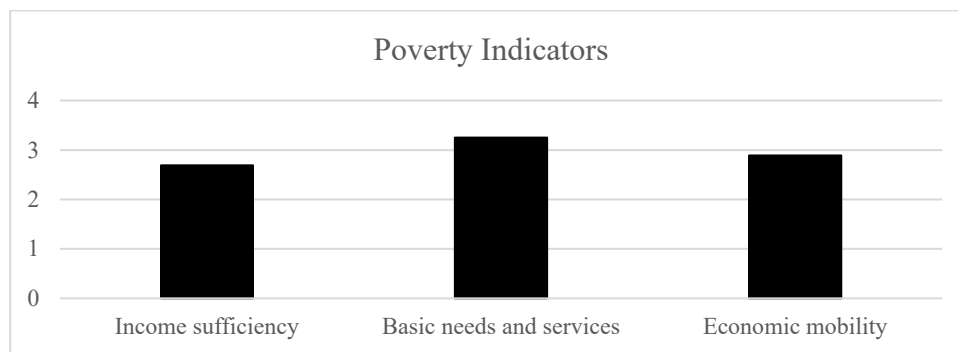


Figure 4. Mean ratings of poverty indicators

The figure presents the mean ratings of poverty indicators. Access to basic needs and services scored the highest ($M = 3.25$), indicating relatively strong support in meeting essential requirements such as food and water. Economic mobility followed with a moderate rating ($M = 2.89$), reflecting some opportunities for advancement but with noted limitations. Income sufficiency received the lowest mean score ($M = 2.69$), underscoring persistent concerns about financial adequacy.

5. Relationship Between CSR, Community Well-being, and Poverty

Regression analysis confirmed that CSR initiatives in health ($p = 0.01$), community development ($p = 0.05$), and environmental sustainability ($p = 0.04$) were significantly associated with higher levels of community well-being. In contrast, education programs did not yield significant results ($p = 0.72$). These

results suggest that CSR interventions with immediate, visible benefits are more strongly perceived as improving quality of life than those with long-term outcomes. This aligns with Xu and Ma (2021), who found that health-related CSR has more immediate measurable effects compared to education-focused initiatives, which require time to generate intergenerational benefits.

Table 1*Significant relationship between CSR Initiatives and poverty reduction in the community*

CSR Initiatives	Δr^2	F-value	Stand. Estimate	t-value	p-value	Decision
Education and Skills Development			-0.06	-0.67	0.50	Not Significant
Health and Wellness initiatives	0.49	19.8	-0.69	-8.65	0.01	Significant
Community Development and Gift Giving			0.11	1.33	0.19	Not Significant
Environmental Sustainability			0.32	4.14	0.01	Significant

Similarly, CSR initiatives in health ($p = 0.01$) and environmental sustainability ($p = 0.01$) showed significant associations with poverty reduction, while education ($p = 0.50$) and community development ($p = 0.19$) did not. These results highlight that CSR programs directly alleviating household financial burdens—such as healthcare access and environmental job creation—are more immediately effective in reducing poverty. Suhadi et al. (2022) noted similar outcomes in Indonesia, where environmental CSR projects provided sustainable agricultural employment that reduced poverty vulnerability.

The weaker statistical links in education-focused CSR reflect the long-term nature of human capital investments. Uduji et al. (2020) argued that while education CSR empowers future generations, its short-term poverty-reducing effects are minimal. This indicates a need for corporations to integrate education with employability pipelines—such as scholarships linked to job placement—to maximize both immediate and long-term benefits.

Conclusions

The study confirmed that CSR initiatives are significantly related to both community well-being and poverty reduction, validating the hypotheses. Health and environmental programs showed the strongest positive effects, while education initiatives revealed weaker short-term impact. These findings imply that CSR is most effective when addressing immediate community needs but requires sustained, structural interventions to influence long-term outcomes such as income sufficiency and economic mobility. The results highlight the role of CSR as both a community support mechanism and a strategic tool for sustainable development, emphasizing the need for corporations to balance visibility with long-term impact.

Recommendations

This study was limited to selected communities within the NCR and relied on self-reported data, which may introduce bias and limit generalizability. Future research should expand the sample to include diverse geographic regions and industries to capture broader perspectives. Longitudinal designs are also recommended to assess the long-term effects of CSR, particularly in education and livelihood programs where impacts may take years to materialize. Finally, mixed-method approaches combining surveys with qualitative interviews could provide deeper insights into community experiences and the sustainability of CSR initiatives.

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